

Moran Announces Water Conservation Program in Kansas

Project in Upper Arkansas River Area Designed to Conserve Water

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman Jerry Moran today announced the U.S. Department of Agriculture will be enrolling 20,000 acres of eligible irrigated and non-irrigated cropland in the Kansas Upper Arkansas River project area into the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). This will be the first acreage enrolled in CREP in the State of Kansas. The program in Kansas is focused specifically on utilizing CREP in areas where groundwater and surface water shortages are an issue.

"I believe this is an appropriate step in trying to sustain water for future generations," Moran said. "However, I continue to believe we must modify this program. A balance must be had that allows economic activity in the form of production agriculture to continue in an environmentally sensitive way while reducing the usage of water."

CREP is a natural resources conservation program in which participants receive payments from USDA to remove cropland and marginal pastureland from agricultural production and convert the land to native grasses, trees and other vegetation. The primary goals of the Upper Arkansas River CREP are to conserve irrigation water and improve water quality by removing land from production. The CREP project area includes all or parts of Barton, Edwards, Finney, Ford, Gray, Hamilton, Kearny, Pawnee, Stafford and Rice counties.

In its current form, CREP pays agriculture producers to leave land idle and not irrigate in order to conserve water resources. Doing so keeps land capable of producing non-irrigated crops out of production. Earlier this year, Moran successfully added an amendment to the House-passed version of the 2007 Farm Bill to allow dryland crop production and grazing on CREP acres where the program is aimed at reducing water usage. Moran's amendment allows dryland farming on these acres instead of simply idling them and allows agriculture producers to continue farming and supporting the agriculture businesses that are critical to the survival of rural communities. The Senate is currently working on its version of the farm bill.

“I will continue working to modify farm bill provisions to allow dryland farming activities on CREP acres to better preserve economic activity in rural areas in Kansas,” Moran said.

Eligibility requirements for the Upper Arkansas River CREP will be announced by the Farm Service Agency, which administers the program. More information about this project can be found at: http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/kscrep07.pdf . Moran is a senior member of the House Agriculture Committee.

###